

Foróige is a National Youth Development Organisation engaged in Youth Development and Education. Founded in 1952, it is one of Ireland's leading youth organisations engaged in the development and education of young people in Ireland aged 10-18.

It uses a multi-pronged approach in its service provision which enables the organisation to meet the developmental needs of young people in general, as well as focusing on vulnerable young people with specific needs.

The purpose of the organisation is to enable young people to involve themselves consciously and actively in their own development and the development of society. This purpose challenges and supports young people to involve themselves in:

- Developing their character and talents
- Thinking for themselves, reflecting on their actions and taking responsibility
- Having fun and making friends
- Building positive and helpful relationships
- Acquiring knowledge and skills for life
- Improving the community

Foróige established the Big Brother Big Sister (BBBS) programme in 2001 with the mission "To build successful mentoring relationships for all young people, who need and want them, contributing to better schools, brighter futures and stronger communities for all".

BBBS is an internationally renowned proven young mentoring programme. It is based on the idea that having a caring adult friend can help build positive assets in young people enabling them to have a positive sense of self and of their future, a commitment to learning, social competencies of making friends, planning, decision making, resisting negative behaviours and positive values of caring, honesty.....a positive youth development approach.

The programme is operating nationally in both community and school settings. We have made 3,615 friendships to date and our target is to engage 2000 young people per annum.



**Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Ireland**

empowering youth
enriching communities
foróige

Creating Possibilities through Friendships...



Engaging in shared leisure activities with someone you like and who you know likes you enhances the pleasure of everyday life and contributes to better emotional wellbeing (Spencer, 2006; Rook & Underwood, 2000)

(Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)



**Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Ireland**



Big Brother Big Sister
looking forward to
brighter futures by...





Enhancing Young Peoples Wellbeing



Empowering Young People



Connecting Young People



Offering Learning Opportunities



Enhancing Wellbeing...

Laura and Anne's mother have reported that Anne seems to be a happier child as a result of the friendship. She appears to have an enthusiasm for life that she hasn't had for years!

(Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)



Laughter for life...

The difference in her over the last three or even six months has been a change in her that I didn't think I was going to see for a very long time...

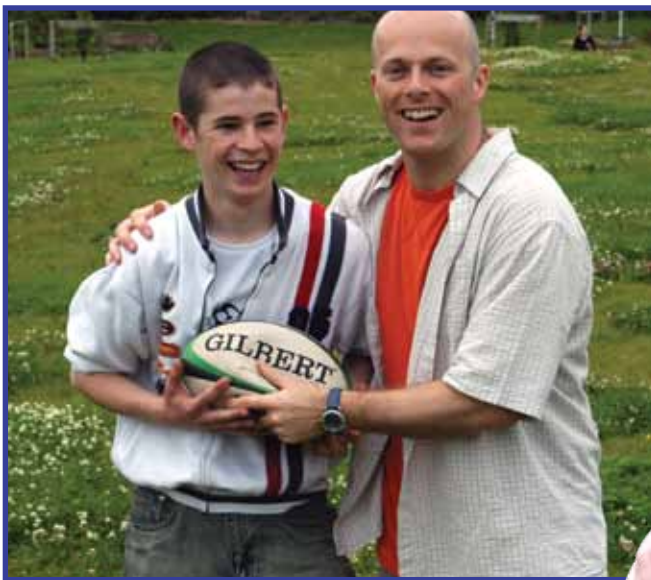
(Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)





The terms ‘happier’ and ‘confident’ and ‘calmer’ were consistently used by parents and young people to describe the changes since the young person was matched with their mentor

(Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)



“Maria’s smile has become brighter..”

(Parent)



“Acting like a big kid is something we’re not suppose to do as adults, but many of us would love an hour ‘off’ from time to time, just hanging out and having fun without a worry in the world and the BBBS programme does just this”

(BBBS Staff, Cork)





Quality Time Together

Overall, the findings suggest that an improved sense of well being is an outcome from the programme for children and young people and that this sense of wellbeing can help build the foundation for the emergence of positive or 'harder' outcomes in domains such as education and risk behaviour. In the study, all of the nine young people were described or described themselves as happy and appeared to derive great enjoyment from their match.

(Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)





“ The last time I met John, we went up to the pitch to see if we could get his homemade kite into the sky! John told me that he made it in school when he was younger. It was so funny because when we eventually got it airborne it nearly took me with it.”

With excitement in his eyes, Kevin went on to say that they are planning to make a new and even bigger kite in the coming weeks. “We might call it The Big Brother”

(Little Brother)



The quantitative strand of this research indicated that young people with a mentor had higher levels of hope than young people without a mentor and that intervention was successful in improving young people’s sense of being supported by parents, siblings friends and other adults. (Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)



“...when you both enjoy throwing stones at cans tossed into the sea, or when you can walk along just happy in each others company, well why do you need to clutter up the day with talk”

(Big Brother, Galway)



Appreciation...

My 'Little Sister' and I have been meeting up since September '09. Just before Christmas, one of our activities was painting. We used acrylic paints and had a lot of fun with them, even though I hadn't painted since I was a child. She, however, was very good and the picture she made that day was beautiful. It was of a tree with blossoms on and three birds in the sky but the part that really made it special for me was a shaft of light that came from the sky over the tree and lit up the ground around the tree. And further more, the paints we were using only came from the pound shop! I was really impressed with her gift for art and she inspired me

to have a go at painting a proper picture myself, which in due course I did. The best was yet to come. On Mother's Day, my 'little Sister's' family invited me to dinner with them at their home. We had a lovely meal and dessert and chatted about everything. My 'Little Sister' disappeared for a moment, but returned to the room with a gift wrapped package in her hands. She presented me with it and it turned out to be the picture, framed and with a lovely note on the back handwritten by her.

I was deeply touched by her thoughtfulness and delighted to hang the picture in pride of place in my kitchen. It catches people's eye and they ask about the picture. I am proud to tell them about my very gifted young friend and also tell them about the BBBS program and how rewarding it is to be involved. My 'Little Sister' and I have done lots of fun things together and each week I look forward to meeting her. She is a delight to be with and we always have a laugh. Last week we chased the sunset until we got to a place where we could watch the sun sink into the sea! It's not everyone you could do that with, is it?

(Big Sister, Donegal).



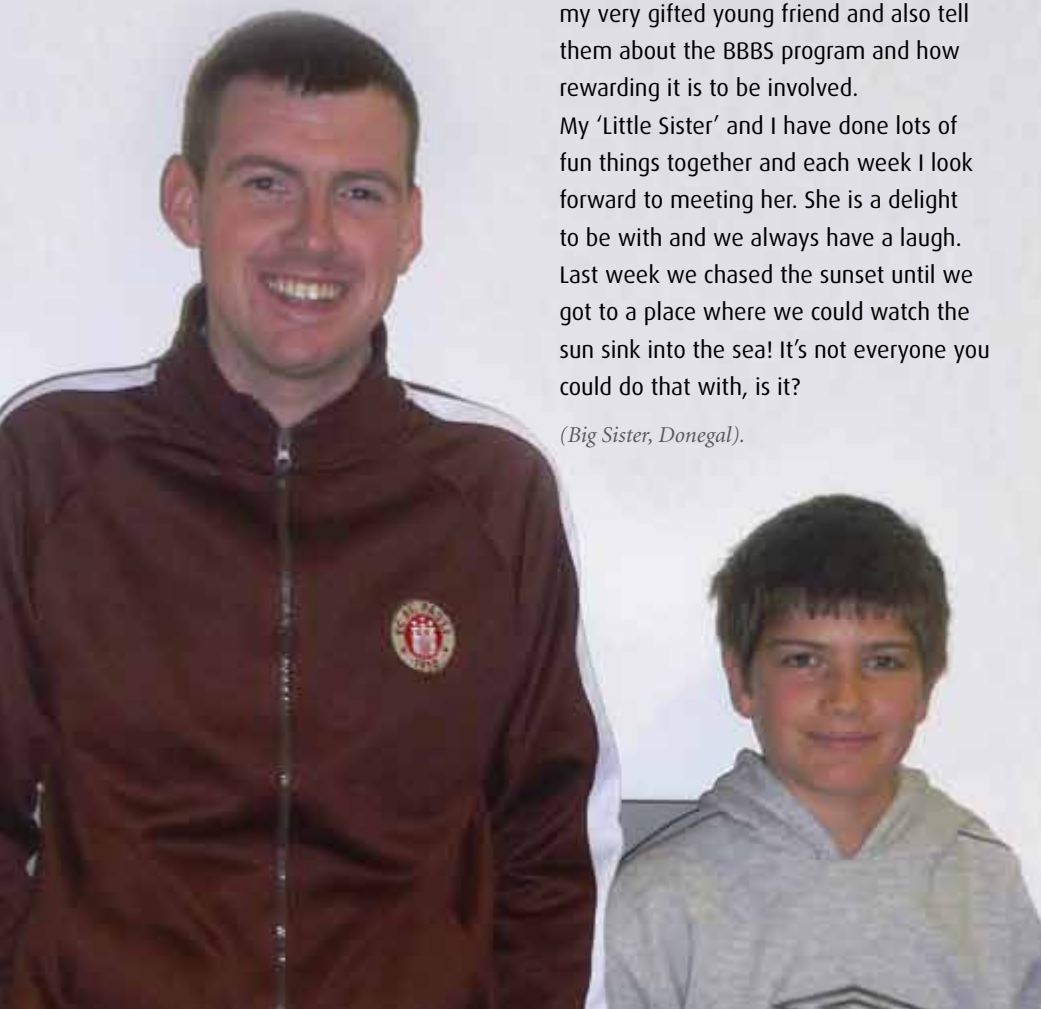
Alison is delighted with how the programme has benefited her son. She said:

"I thought that Max would benefit from a positive male influence in his life, so we signed up to the BBBS programme. We met Kevin, his Big Brother, a few months later and started the link up shortly after. The process was rigorous to ensure that our needs were met and that Max was matched to someone he could really connect with. We get ongoing support from Susan, the programme officer, which has really benefited Max and Kevin. Because Max has no contact with his father, being matched to Kevin has been a great boost to his self esteem."

(Parent)

"I think my little has more confidence and a more positive outlook on life than previously. I also think the other members of her family have benefited by seeing her having a positive relationship."

(Mentor, cited in the Pilot Study, 2003, NUI Galway)





The success of the match is that Kevin now has a positive male influence in his life, a Big Brother whom he admires, aspires to be like, whom he trusts, who has the time and ability to play sports, to build and create things, to introduce him to new exciting activities, to seek advice from, to laugh with.....

Parent, Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)

“Yeah, she always has a big smile on her face when she’s talking about her Big Sister you know, looks forward to the call, yeah I mean I think it was Little’s confirmation there a while ago and do you know, Big Sister sent her a card and gave her a present and she thought the world of that.....So things like that meant a lot to the child you know...”

(Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)



**Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Ireland**

Modelling Values for Positive Living...

The first years transition into secondary school has been made so much easier as a result of this programme. They have enjoyed meeting up with their Big Brothers and Big Sisters, playing games, listening to music or just chatting. As a result of this link they feel at ease with the senior students. It has meant that, in the last two years, since this programme was introduced in our school we have experienced no incidence of inappropriate behaviour or bullying among first years. This speaks for itself.

(Teacher, Mayo)



Atticus Finch's Maxim:

"To truly understand someone, you've got to put on their shoes and walk around for awhile."

"To act as a good example to her, so she might think" what would M do in a situation like this?"

Mentor, Pilot study, 2003, NUI Galway)

Caring
Understanding



Students have benefited greatly. The senior students have given up freely of their lunchtime to mentor first years. In doing so they have taken on the responsibility of looking out for a first year and also learned the benefits of giving freely of their time for someone else. Fifth years have developed and matured as a result.

(Teacher, Mayo)

*Civic Responsibility
Honesty
Empathy
Respect
Kindness*

“It has been a great success. My son gets on great with his big brother and it has given him a really good male role model. Before the programme he didn’t have any male influence in his life.”

(Parent, Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)

“I try to encourage my little to do the best they can and also try to impart some values to him. I sometimes act as an advice giver.”

(Mentor Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)

“Students have benefited greatly. The senior students have given up freely of their time lunchtime to mentor a first year. In doing this they have taken on the responsibility of looking out for a first year and also learned the benefits of giving freely of their time for someone else. 5th years have developed and matured as a result.”

(Link teacher)

“I feel proud of him when he accomplishes something at school or in sport. And I feel disappointed when he experiences a knock back”

(Big Brother, Roscommon)



**Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Ireland**

Empowering Young People...

His Big Brother encouraged him to return to education, which he did. Paul completed Youth Reach and is due to commence a FAS Scheme. For the first time in his life Paul has a goal to work towards. He is still meeting his Big Brother regularly. His Big Brother provided him with relief when things weren't going well and he has been a caring person to talk to when needed.

(BBBS Staff, Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)



Encouraging



"I think we all need to know that there is someone in our corner rooting for us to become the best that we can be and this is what big brother big sister is all about"

Big Brother (Big Brother, Dublin)



Supporting...

Jamelia was a 15 year old girl when she arrived in Ireland from Ethiopia. She was isolated from her family and friends and was finding it difficult to cope with the change of culture and dramatic upheaval in her life. Jamelia is now an intelligent and socially conscious 19 year old. Deirdre is from Dublin and is the mother of two adopted children, aged 5 and 7, from Ethiopia. Deirdre and Jamelia have built a strong and supportive friendship over the three years, during which time Jamelia has got to know Deirdre's children. She enjoys meeting with them and assists in educating them about their Ethiopian culture. Although the match closed last year Deirdre and Jamelia continue to meet up and enjoy each others company.....Jamelia has said on many occasions that she has found Deirdre's support invaluable in terms of her successful integration into the Irish culture. She no longer feels isolated as she has developed friendships with peers. She is currently studying in college and is awaiting the outcome of the asylum process.

(Big Sister, Dublin)



When you are in first year you think that seniors are much older than you and your kind of intimidated. Because Clare was my Big Sister I got to know her friends as well and it felt as if the whole group were protecting me.

(Little Sister, Mayo)

Ive been matched to my big brother for 10 months and since then I have gained refugee status and moved into private rented accommodation. Im not sure id be settled in my own place if it wasn't for all his help and support.

(Little Brother, Dublin)

“To be a supportive big sister who would encourage the little to be the best that they can be. To give them hope and inspiration to show them that there is a big world out there which is theirs for the taking and also what they put into life they will get out of it”

Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway



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Offering new opportunities

Sarah has always been an ambitious young person who wants to overcome the poverty cycle by doing well in school and continuing on to University. Andrea spent a number of weeks researching and helping Sarah to apply for scholarships to fee paying secondary schools (with the support of Sarah's father). Without Andrea's support Sarah and her father would not have had the information or skills needed to apply for scholarships. Therefore, Andrea is providing Sarah with new opportunities she would otherwise not have had and empowering Sarah to fulfil her ambition.

Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)

"I see myself as a good friend, support and advice giver to my little sister. I am a person who she can discover or experience a different perspective with. I see myself as someone who can be there when she needs me and learn new ways of doing things"

(Big Sister, BBBS Pilot study, 2003, NUI Galway)

" It's brilliant, I love her to bits. She is exactly the type of Big Sister I wanted. She brings me to places I wouldn't get to go to otherwise; museums and that kind of thing.

(Little Sister)



On closing the match, Shona remarked how being matched with Cathy gave her the confidence to complete her leaving cert and apply for the nursing course.

(BBBS Staff)

“Shaunnagh was very quiet and lacking in confidence. Upon being told about Big Brother Big Sister, I felt we had nothing to lose and it sounded like fun. Little did I know however the impact it would have and the wonderful friendship and joy Donna has brought into Shaunnagh’s life. Shaunnagh now helps out every Friday night at her brothers swimming group which is something she could never have done before through her lack of confidence.”

(Parent)



What the Bigs & Littles Say....

*“thanks to my Big I passed my driver theory test first time”
(Little Brother)*

When Cherelle expressed her interest in going into the Media, Jane took her to RTE and spoke to people on the set of Fair City about how to get into this line of work, and is hoping to pursue a career in television.

(BBBS Staff)



Developing Skills and Hobbies

The young person was suffering from anxiety and had a fear of making friends and participating in group activities. Since matched, the young person has formed a strong friendship with her Big Sister. She attended her first group activity this July with the support of her Big Sister. She has since started secondary school and is getting on well.

(BBBS Staff, Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)

“We sometimes talk about her future and what she wants to do. We gossip and chat and occasionally I can pass on a bit of advice.”

(Big Sister, Dublin)



Teamwork • Planning • Decision Making





"Meeting up with Julianne every week is great fun. She gives me my weekly catch up on what's going on in the soap world! We love going shopping, swimming and to the cinema. We're really looking forward to using the climbing wall in Mardyke - once we work up the courage. We both love to talk, so going for a hot chocolate or just hanging out at the park playing cards gives us a lot of time to do this! We always have lots of laughs every time we meet up"

(Big Sister, Cork)

"The two of us are huge football fans so we really get on and have great crack when we go see football matches."

Big Brother Dublin (Big Brother, Dublin)

Photography • Pitch & Putt • Rugby • Athletics



**Big Brothers Big Sisters
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Inspiring young people to...

Do More...

Be More...

Try Hard

"My mam always used to give out to me about not spending anytime with my younger brother. I just thought she was giving out to me for the sake of it, but since I have gotten a Big Brother myself I have changed my mind. Now I know what its like to have someone older to hang around with it and it means a lot to me. I try now to be a better big brother myself and spend more time with him".

(Little Brother, Galway)

They may also have been motivated by seeing their mentor as living a life that they aspired to. For example one girl who wanted to be a lawyer was matched with a post graduate law student who could tell her about college life. The girl was doing well at school and was likely to have benefited from seeing a version of her 'possible self'. (Marcus and Nurius. 1986.)

(Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)

" I want to be a lawyer because I like the idea of bringing justice, I'd like to make a difference....."

(Little Sister, Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)



" I have made a new friend, she is really sound"

(Little Sister, Cavan/Monaghan)



Inspiring young people to...

Contribute to the Community



" Wanted to help children /teenager because I believe if they are positively influenced at this stage, it will effect the rest of their lives. Wanted to make a big difference (positive) To one person rather than a little difference to many people.

(Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Pilot Study, 2005, NUI Galway) (Pilot)

" ...maybe let him see that there is a bit of direction, a different type of direction than he is currently used to going, that by working extremely hard you will get nice cars, nice house, you will get all these things and that there is more to football than just.....going over to England and playing football, there's far more to it like...just to reach the target of being a footballer first you've got to train. It starts with the very basics so he understands some of the principles, little principles like that..."

(Mentor, Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)

" I got on brilliant with him. He's like one of my mates. He's a normal guy, he's like dead sound."

(Little Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)



Big Brothers Big Sisters Rap

Verse 1

Hanging with my friend in the neighbourhood
Spending time together, the way good friends should,
Walking on the beach, playing some pool,
Hanging with my bro. Can be really really cool!
Meeting new people, learning new stuff,
Always around, when times get tough!
Are you up for the challenge?
Do you want to take part?
Put your name down and make a new start!

Chorus

Come on we are here today, Big Brothers Big Sisters,
Help and guide you on your way, Big Brothers Big Sisters,
Come on open up your heart, Big Brothers Big Sisters,
It's up to you to make the start, Big Brothers Big Sisters,

Verse 2

Chilling with my friend in the neighbourhood
Spending time together, the way good friends should
Going for coffee, swimming in the pool
Dancing to the music can be really really cool !
Baking a cake, shopping in town,
Having a laugh when things get you down,
Are you up for the challenge, do you want to take part?
Put your name down and make a fresh start.

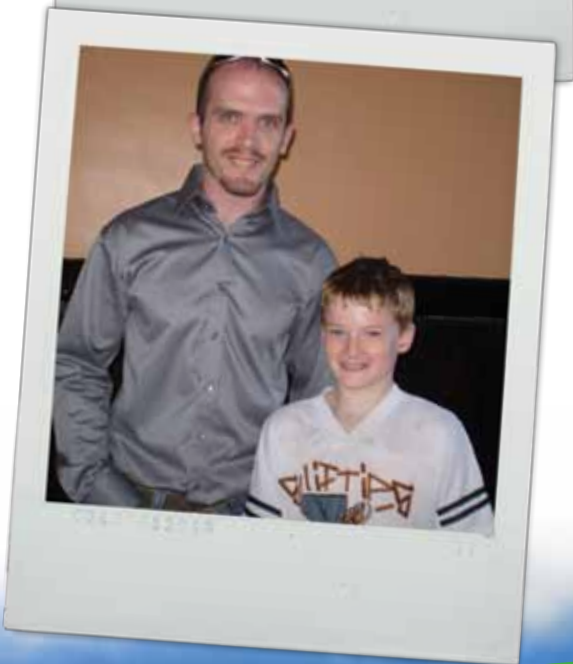
Repeat Chorus

Verse 3

Hanging with my friend in the neighbourhood
Spending time together, the way good friends should,
Sharing ideas about life after school,
Checking our style can be really, really cool
Learning from others, taking time out,
Making the best of things, is what it's all about!
Are you up for the challenge, do you want to take part?
Put your name down and make a fresh start.

Repeat Chorus





Young at heart
Opportunities for life
Uncovering new talents
Time together
Happiness

Memories
Enhancing wellbeing
Not giving up
Teaching moments
Organising activities
Recognising effort
Inspiring
Nurturing
Giving and receiving



Connecting...



Active Listening

“Understanding when I just have to listen and not solve his challenges”

(Cited in BBBS Pilot Study, 2005, NUI Galway)

“to respect the little brother and his ways...not to judge him, to give him some space, to listen to him, to play with him, to be reliable, to show him different ways (model)”

(Cited in BBBS Pilot Study, 2005, NUI Galway)

“the strength of this form of mentoring is that it can take each young person where he or she is at and thus the outcomes will vary according to needs.”

(Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)

“The BBBS mentoring programme is capable of creating a space for vulnerable children and young people where their own needs can be prioritised”

(Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)

Communicating...



We got on really well and even now four years later whenever I meet her we'll stop and have a chat. She still calls me her Big Sister.

(Big Sister)

On the day we met, I was having bother with my ears, tinnitus and deafness, so my new little brother's trouble with speech caused us to get off to a very strange start.

We joked that he couldn't speak too well and I couldn't hear too well, so we should get along. I think he said he liked Hip Hop music which I must admit leaves me cold, and he snorted through his nose when I mentioned Status Quo. A year later and we still have problems communicating, but then so do lots of people...

(Big Brother, Galway)



**Big Brothers Big Sisters
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Expanding Social Networks...

Robert is now linked into other social outlets such as the local youth project and has joined the local karate club. He is creating a wider circle of friendships with people his own age.

(BBBS Staff)

Peer relationships are of great importance as a source of support for young people in middle childhood and adolescence. The absence of friendships can be very problematic and lead to poor self-esteem and isolation. (Kelly, Molcho & Nic Gabhainn, 2009; Cotterell, 2007) There are many references to improvements in children's relationships with peers as a result of their participation in the BBBS programme, as predicted by Jean Rhodes model of mentoring.

(Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)

I really enjoy the group events, where all the matches from the region get together. It's a great chance for me to see each of the matches interacting with each other.....how well the Bigs and Littles have gotten to know each other, and how the Bigs support and encourage their Littles doing group activities.

(BBBS Staff)



School Programmes • Summer Day Trips • BBQ's



Sports Camps • Christmas Parties • National Events



We got to do a variety of different things, we got to do things I wouldn't do otherwise, we had loads of fun, (mentor) is great craic, we got to meet loads of different people

(Little sister, BBBS Pilot Study, 2005, NUI Galway)

The boy I meet doesn't have great role models so it's helpful for him to be taken out of his day to day situation and see how other people live..

(Big Brother, Dublin)

BBBS has helped me to make new friends and to trust other people.

(Little Brother, Dublin)

Being a Big Brother has been very rewarding...it is great to see how our friendship has grown from the first few very quiet meetings to the constant chat we enjoy now. The outing to Delphi Mountain Resort was a great 'get to know you' experience and the Bigs & Littles seemed to enjoy it equally. It was hard to tell who was who at times. It was also great to meet up with other matches and share stories. I would recommend it to anyone who has a few spare hours a week to give.

(Big Brother, Sligo)

It was nice to talk to other people in the same situation.....I made some good friends through meeting the other volunteers.

(Mentor, Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)



**Big Brothers Big Sisters
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Encouraging Positive Relationships...

“This has been a fantastic opportunity for me and my Little Brother. We have been matched for over a year and this weekend really opened my eyes to how much he has matured during this time. His confidence has really grown and he has no problem interacting with other young people and adults now. The best thing about the weekend was that we were both doing activities we had never done before. When we went out in the one canoe we had awful trouble trying to get it to go in the one direction. He was instructing me....it was hilarious!”

(Big Brother, Galway)

It reflects Rhodes’s (2005) view that positive relationships with mentors can generalise, enabling young people to interact with others more effectively.

(Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)

“...Because the parent-child relationship is so critical to a young person’s well-being and development, it is possible that greater harmony and less conflict in this relationship also helped to bring about the changes in the areas of education, emotional well-being and risk behaviour described earlier.

(Parent, Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)

....relationships between young people and their parents improved as a consequence of their taking part in the mentoring relationship, because it gave the parents a break, helped to alleviate tension and conflict in the relationship where such conflict was present and showed to young people that they could ‘get on’ with adults.

(Parent, Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)



Amongst Family



In the Community • At School • At Home...

The parent of the young person in this match described how the mentoring relationship had shown her son that positive relationships with adults were possible.

(Parent, Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)

It has been a wonderful and invaluable experience for me. I have connected as an individual with a very courageous family and witnessed their strength and my little's strength through adversity

(Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Pilot Study, 2005, NUI Galway)

Where there were serious tensions, young people were reportedly happier and 'in better form' because they were looking forward to getting out with their mentor and less likely to take any frustrations out on their parents.

(Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)



Advocating...

Sean, Big Brother, has been matched to Nelson from Nigeria, since 2007.

Sean is the Principal of an inner city primary school. Nelson was a very vulnerable young boy when he became involved in BBBS. He was originally from a rural part of Nigeria and found the move to Ireland daunting, as he didn't speak English and didn't understand the Irish culture and systems. Sean and Nelson have built a strong and comfortable friendship. Over the three years Nelson has found Sean's support invaluable. He has assisted Nelson in understanding the Irish Education and legal system. Nelson's confidence has increased and he has learned to speak English. He has helped out in Sean's school on a number of occasions, refereeing football matches and assisting in organising activities in the school.



Advocating...

Jennifer and I were introduced in 2007 through the BBBS programme. At the time our worlds seemed incompatible!!!! I was a mother of four grown up children who had been educated to 3rd level in Ireland and were settling down to have families, careers and plans of their own. Jennifer on the other hand was living in a girls hostel in Tallaght with her beautiful young son, aged 8 months. She had fled Kenya for reasons that are known only to her. We developed a strong bond, meeting up frequently for coffee, long chats, visits to parks, drives on the beach and I enjoyed watching her son grow and develop. Jennifer entered school when she came to Ireland and completed her Leaving Certificate, in which she excelled.

Her long term plan is to become a nurse and she is hoping to start college this year. Jennifer taught me a lot about life in Kenya and a huge amount about how difficult it can be to integrate into a new society. I hope I helped her in small ways to understand how systems work in Ireland. She showed me how independent, strong and committed young refugees can be when faced with a new society that offers hope for the future. I am so glad I became involved with the programme and I hope in the future to be involved again

The photo was taken on a weekend Adventure trip to Delphi Adventure Centre. I had never kayaked, but I did that weekend....thanks Jen.



Offering Learning Opportunities



*Emphasising
the value of
education*



Recently Grace completed her Junior Cert, which she had previously refused to do, and was very happy with her results. She is now talking about what she will do after her leaving cert is completed.

(Big Sister, Cork)

My little brother wanted to attend college but was having trouble doing this and claiming his full social welfare. We spoke about his needs and rights and I met with a representative of the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs on his behalf. He is now doing a course in English and receiving his full welfare entitlements.

(Big Brother)

With the Big Sister's encouragement and support, the young person returned to Youthreach the following year.

(Parent)

Research suggests that mentors can influence young people's attitudes to education in a number of ways, for example, through giving positive messages regarding the value of school, helping with homework and providing advice, guidance and encouragement. (Rhodes, 2005; DuBois et al, 2002). The issue of education and school was referred to by all mentors as something they considered important and wished to positively influence in the young person.

(Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)





This programme has benefited the school as a whole as it has created and developed a caring, respectful atmosphere in the school which has in turn promoted a healthy learning environment. From a personal point of view I have got to know the students on a more informal level. It has helped give me a better understanding of the students and I hope it has made me a better teacher. I have learned also the benefits of giving my time and most of all I have great fun and enjoyment out of doing this programme.

(Teacher)

The evidence suggests that the young person's greater sense of wellbeing as a result of their match appeared to be making them more settled at school.

(Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)



I have always seen my match with Rachael as a friendship. She has been so good to me over the last couple of years. I will always keep in touch with Rachael, even after the match has finished”.

(Little Sister)

I think we both share many interests. We have developed a very open and honest relationship. She teaches me a lot about life and visa versa.

(Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Pilot Study, 2005, NUI Galway)



Trying new activities...

While positive messages from the mentor in relation to school were important, the real change in case appears to have been driven by the shared enjoyment of past-times that the young person was passionate about.

(Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)

Sine I've met up with BB I've got like about four hundred music tracks out there and they are doing pretty well so I'm being recognised for my own music and im being recognised for being in Big Brother Big Sister and ...I have done courses up in Dublin which have been mind blowing, once in a lifetime opportunity and if it wasn't for Big Brother, I don't know where id be today...

(Young person, Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)

Rewarding effort...





I reassure him that I don't know everything and there's things that he can teach me, so he can teach me, so he can feel that he knows something that he's teaching me, so then when the time comes and the reverse is there, he'll accept it more

(Mentor, Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)

Access to Resources Encouragement



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Vision for the Future...

There were also examples in the case studies of non-formal learning or education, whereby young people learned important skills or knowledge that are likely to be of value in the real world if not in the education system. For example, one parent was aware that her son did not need help with the academic side of school but needed to become more street-wise, something his mentor was also aware of.

Secondly, there was evidence in one case of a young person developing a clear sense of direction in his life which resulted in a radical change in his approach to school. Thirdly, there were examples of non-formal education whereby young people were exposed to learning experiences likely to be of value in life...

Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)

Setting goals...



Motivating to achieve

Accessing resources

The programme therefore gave him a range of non-formal learning experiences as well as clarity on the direction he wanted his career to go. As a result the young person's behaviour at school greatly improved and he became very motivated to pursue the career path he had uncovered, even though he still did not like school.

(Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Evaluation Study, 2010, NUI Galway)

I believe he has swung in the right way in a case when I met him he was as a crossroads . i.e. could have gone down a positive or negative road.

(Cited in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Pilot Study, 2005, NUI Galway)

During the summer camp week we got to play football with a bunch of guards. Each of us had a guard as our big brother for the afternoon. It was great fun and a close game. My team won. The best part of the day was asking my big brother questions about being a guard. I would like to be a guard when I am older, so it was good to get to know a real life guard. He even invited me his garda station, to spend an afternoon looking at what they do...that will be really cool !!

(Little on waiting list)



Encouraging good decision – making



**Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Ireland**

My Little

I recall that moment, like it was yesterday.
He walked into the room; I greeted him "Hey".
No doubt it was awkward and the room was stress-filled,
But friendships like buildings take time to build.

I supported City and he supported United.
But differences create banter at which we delighted.
When it came to types of music, rarely did we agree.
"I'll listen to Dré or Snoop Dog if you try some AC/DC".

Spending time with my Little Brother kept me young and cool.
Now I had the perfect partner to regularly practice playing pool.
Neither of us had confidence to play with any other friend.
But through mutual encouragement our game improved no end.

It's over four years now since our paths first did cross.
My Little Brother now towers over me and is most certainly the boss.
Next year he turns eighteen and the match officially ends.
But he'll always be in my life as one of my eternal friends.

Friendships are like developments; encountering many phases.
What started as a cinder now roars as it blazes.
I have seen him grow up into a well rounded young man.
And if anyone can reach their potential, my Little Brother can.





